
Candidacy Policy Program

Purpose of the Candidate for Accreditation:

The purpose for the candidacy program is to help assure that institutions develop O&P education programs with adequate planning and the necessary resources (e.g., leadership, faculty, physical plant, and budget). This program allows developing O&P programs the opportunity to establish a formal and publicly recognized relationship with NCOPE.

POLICY: Definition of Candidate for Accreditation: Candidate for Accreditation is a status that indicates that the orthotic and prosthetic education program is progressing toward formal accreditation. Attainment of Candidate for Accreditation status does not assure accreditation by NCOPE/CAAHEP. The purpose is to help assure that the institution develops an O&P program with adequate planning and with the necessary resources (e.g., leadership, faculty, physical plant, budget, clinical education sites).

Advertisement of Status

POLICY Developing programs must accurately describe their status to avoid any implications that accreditation is guaranteed in any way. It is expected that, prior to achieving candidacy, developing program utilize, at a minimum, the following language to describe their status in the accreditation process:

(Name of Program/Institution) is seeking accreditation by the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education. The program [will submit/has submitted] an Application for Candidacy, which is the formal application required in the pre-accreditation stage. Submission of this document does not assure that the program will be granted Candidate for Accreditation status nor does it assure that the program will be granted Accreditation.

Enrollment of Students

POLICY Developing program may initiate processes to identify and screen applicants for the charter class prior to achieving Candidate for Accreditation status. All information provided to prospective students must include the statement above. The granting of Candidate for Accreditation status must occur prior to enrollment of students in the professional/technical phase of the O&P education program.

Developing O&P programs that do not attain Candidate for Accreditation status will not be considered for accreditation by NCOPE or receive a recommendation to CAAHEP.

Developing programs that fail to achieve Candidate for Accreditation status are expected to refrain from enrolling/matriculating students into the program

Application for Candidate Status**Submission Requirements**

POLICY An institution that desires to seek NCOPE/CAAHEP accreditation of a developing O&P education program must submit an application no later than ten months prior to the planned enrollment of the first class of students in the professional or technical phase of the program. If the Candidacy Application is not submitted according the established time schedule, NCOPE cannot guarantee that a candidacy decision will be made prior to the intended date of enrollment of the charter class of students.

Applications must include:

1. A completed Application for Candidate Accreditation, which is signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the sponsoring institution and the program director who has responsibility for the program.
2. Evidence of appropriate state approval to offer the program, if necessary.
3. Evidence that the institution planning to offer the program is, or has an executed formal agreement with, an institution of higher education with degree granting authority and accreditation from an agency or association recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or evidence that the institution has at least candidate status granted by the appropriate accrediting agency or association.
4. Evidence that the institution has employed a program administrator/director who meets the Standards related to qualifications. The program administrator/director should be employed full-time to plan, as well as implement, the program. This individual plans and implements the academic and clinical education components (where appropriate) of the program; demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum; provides timely communication with the institution, profession and other communities of interest; and demonstrates a concern with the future welfare of the education program being developed.
5. Evidence that the institution and program agree not to enroll students in the program until Candidate for Accreditation status has been achieved.

Application

POLICY Submission of the Application for Candidate Status (ACS) is a crucial step in the accreditation process for O&P program. The ACS is a report through which the institution provides information in response to the items in the *Standards*. The information and data submitted in the ACS are used to identify areas of weakness that might preclude compliance with the *Standards* and to offer recommendations for strengthening the education program. In addition, submission of the ACS and receipt of same by NCOPE provides the basis for establishing a reasonable timetable for the accreditation process.

The ACS is submitted to NCOPE from the institution where the education program is located. In order to assure a timely review during the pre-accreditation process and to have adequate time for the accreditation action to cover the first class of graduates, five copies of the ACS are to be submitted no later than ten months prior to enrollment of the first class of students in the professional or technical phase of the program. In cases of curricular design of one year or less, frequently seen in certificate level programs, the program is expected to submit the ACS a full year in advance.

NCOPE will accept materials at any time but will not assure the institution that the final action will be timely in order to cover the students initially enrolled in the program if the suggested timeline is not followed.

Review of ACS

POLICY

The staff of NCOPE will screen the ACS to determine its completeness and readiness for further review by the ACS committee. If it is deemed appropriate to continue in the review process, the ACS will be evaluated by the ACS committee and the institution will receive a written report regarding the program's progress toward compliance with the *Standards*, judgments concerning institutional readiness to start the proposed program and suggestions related to findings with respect to the *Standards*.

The self-study review committee will develop a report after a thorough review of the program's ACS. In preparing the report, the committee will make assessments of the program's satisfactory progress toward compliance with each standard based on the documentation provided in the ACS. Determinations made include: 1) satisfactory progress toward compliance; 2) the area needs further development; or 3) due to insufficient information, the committee is unable to determine if satisfactory progress has been made toward compliance. The committee is asked to briefly describe in narrative format the strengths and deficiencies apparent in each standard at this stage of the program's development. Following the assessment of each standard the committee will provide, in narrative format, consultative suggestions for the enhancement and development of program resources as they relate to the Standards.

The ACS application and the ACS committee's evaluation report are considered to be working documents and are not shared with NCOPE board of directors.

Notice of ACS Committee Review

POLICY

Following receipt of the ACS committee's report, the program must determine whether or not the first class of students should be enrolled or if enrollment of the first class should be postponed. Should the decision be made to continue in the development of the program, the submission of a revised ACS application which is reflective of further program development and responsive to the ACS committee's first report is required

and is followed by a Candidate Visit to the program. The Revised Application is submitted at least three weeks prior to the on-site visit.

Revised Application

POLICY At least three weeks prior to the scheduled on-site visit for candidate status, the institution must submit five copies of the revised application for candidate status (ACS) to NCOPE. The Revised Application is expected to be a complete version of the original application, including appendices, which has been revised as appropriate.

The revision should be a description of the program at the later stage of development and should include a description of all changes that have occurred since the submission of the original application.

Candidate Status Site Visit

POLICY A one and half-day Candidate visit is a routine component of the candidate program and is conducted by a site evaluator selected for the specific purpose of serving as an ad hoc representative of NCOPE. It usually occurs approximately four months prior to the first academic term during which students are to be enrolled in the professional or technical phase of the program.

If an institution wishes to postpone the Candidate Visit, it may do so only to the extent that the visit would occur within three months of the originally scheduled time frame. Should an institution wish a longer delay, then a new Application for ACS will be required and a reapplication fee will be charged.

The on-site visit will consist of an series of conferences with administrative officials and faculty of the program along with visits to selected program facilities. The visit provides a view of the O&P education program in its particular environment. The purpose of the visit is to provide a mechanism for verification and supplementation of information included in the application for ACS, and to assess the program's readiness to proceed with implementation of the program and the accreditation process.

Report from Candidacy Visit

POLICY The completed report from the Candidacy Visit is to be submitted to NCOPE within ten working days of the visit. The report is then forwarded to the institution for correction of any factual errors and/or clarification of any errors of interpretation. A copy of the report will be submitted to NCOPE along with any response to the report from the institution. The response to the report is due within thirty (30) days of its receipt by the program.

NCOPE Decisions

POLICY The granting of Candidate for Accreditation status must occur prior to enrollment of students in the professional/technical phase of the O&P education program.

NCOPE will make candidacy decisions approximately two to two and one-half months prior to the planned enrollment of students.

If the institution requests an extension of the time for a response to the Candidate Visit report, NCOPE will make the candidacy decision no later than forty-five days following submission by the institution of all materials that responded to the visit report.

Candidacy Decisions Rationale

POLICY NCOPE makes Candidate for Accreditation decisions based on its determination that the program is making satisfactory progress toward compliance

The following is a list of the **minimum** level of achievement expected by NCOPE during the Candidacy process. The list is tied to the *Standards*. Development beyond the minimal levels described below at the time of the candidacy decision is highly desirable; development that does not reach this level will decrease the likelihood of a positive candidacy decision. It is expected that as evidenced in the ACS and by the time of the candidate site visit, the program will have:

1. evidence that the sponsoring institution is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of education. In addition, evidence of appropriate state approval(s) if necessary. (I.A.)
2. institutional policies related to academic standards and to faculty roles and workload that are/will be applied to the program that recognizes the O&P education program as both a professional and an academic discipline. (I.C. and III.B.)
3. document the program specific policies and procedures (II.A, III.A., V.A – F)
4. document the program mission, goals, and expected program outcomes. (II.A.)
5. document the plans for an ongoing, formal program assessment process. (III. D., IV.A-B)
6. developed and documented policies and procedures affecting student recruitment, admission and retention. (V.A. 1-3)

7. provided prospective students with accurate information about the program; including the program's accreditation status. ((V.A.1 – 3)
8. determined the projected size and composition of the entire program faculty, matching the variety of faculty responsibilities identified in III.B.1. – 2. and in keeping with the institution's expectations for faculty workload. (III.B.1 – 2)
9. hired at least two qualified full-time core faculty including the program administrator; the hired faculty must be qualified to implement the first year of the program. (III.B.1 – 2)
10. developed a written plan for meeting the resource needs of the program as outlined in Standards. (II. A. and III.A – D)
11. documented a projected budget covering the full implementation (through graduation of the charter class) of the program. (III.A.)
12. hired adequate support staff to meet the needs of the developing program. (III.B.)
13. identified the learning resources currently available as well as those still needed for the program. (III.A)
14. identified classroom space, laboratory space, storage space, faculty and staff offices, etc., sufficient to meet the needs of the fully implemented program. (III.A.)
15. obtained sufficient equipment, technology, and materials for the current needs. (III.A. and III. C.)
16. acquired equipment, technology, and materials needed for the first term of the program and documented plans for acquiring equipment and materials as needed by the program throughout the remainder of its implementation. (III.A. – C.)
17. a documented curriculum plan that is based on information about the current practice of O&P, standards of practice, and current literature, documents, publications, and other resources related to the profession, to O&P education, and to educational theory; and includes
 - a. the philosophy and the principles and values of the program
 - b. statements of expected student outcomes;
 - c. determination of prerequisites;
 - d. the curriculum model and educational principles on which the curriculum is built;
 - e. the projected course of study (a series of organized, sequential and integrated courses designed to facilitate achievement of the expected student outcomes);
 - f. course syllabi with objectives stated in behavioral terms that are reflective of the breadth and depth of the course content and of the level of student performance expected;
 - g. for courses to be taught in the first year: complete syllabi for all courses, including course title, description, specific objectives, specific content outline, instructional methods, textbooks and other learning resources, mechanisms for evaluation of student performance, instructor, and credit and clock hours;
 - h. for courses to be taught in subsequent years: syllabi including title, description, general course objectives, basic content outline, and credit and

- clock hours. Other information listed in g, should be included if known;
- i. a variety of evaluation processes;
 - j. an on-going process to assess the curriculum. (III.C. and D)

Decision Options

POLICY After a complete review of the information contained in the ACS, the site Site report for Candidate Status, the additional materials requested by the committee, and the response of the institution, NCOPE will act to grant Candidate for Accreditation status to the program if the program demonstrates satisfactory progress toward compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Orthotics and Prosthetics*. The attainment of Candidate for Accreditation status is required for the program to proceed with the accreditation process.

If the program is judged not to have made satisfactory progress toward compliance with the Standards, NCOPE will deny Candidate for Accreditation status. A program that is denied candidate status will not be permitted to proceed with the accreditation process. An action to deny candidate status is an adverse action and is eligible for reconsideration at the request of the sponsoring institution.

Length of Candidate for Accreditation Status

POLICY Candidate for Accreditation status is limited to two years or the length of the professional/technical phase of the program, whichever is longer. Candidacy may be renewed for two years by NCOPE, except that the maximum length of time that a program may hold Candidacy is five years.

Reports during Candidate Accreditations Status

POLICY During the period of candidacy, the program will be expected to provide any information requested by NCOPE, including but not limited to, submission of an abbreviated annual report.

Withdrawal of Application

POLICY NCOPE will allow the program to withdraw its application at anytime prior to final NCOPE action on the materials described above.

An institution that has achieved Candidate for Accreditation for its O&P program may withdraw its request for accreditation at any time prior to the meeting of NCOPE at which the accreditation decision is schedule to be made by submitting a letter from the chief executive officer requesting such withdrawal.

Reconsideration and Reapplication

POLICY If an education program is denied candidate status, the institution and program may reapply at any time the institution judges the corrections have been made in the deficiencies that led to the denial. Reapplication requires submission of a new application for candidate status and the process will start from the beginning, including a site visit.